

2025 Presidential Guiding Principles

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1. Introduction

In December 2000, I visited Chiang Rai, a city in northern Thailand, as part of a high school experiential learning trip. We explored the area once known as the Golden Triangle, infamous for being the world's largest opium poppy cultivation zone. At that time, Chiang Rai was a place where many street children gathered around tourists. Our guide and teachers warned us not to give money to these children, as they were being exploited by handlers. I resolved firmly not to give them any money.

The sight of one particular girl, however, made me waver in my resolve. Among the many street children surrounding me, one girl stood at a distance, observing. She appeared to be in the upper grades of elementary school and was carrying a small child on her back. The child looked pale, with its head drooping and arms hanging limply, almost lifeless. The moment I saw the girl, she reminded me of my younger sister, who is six years younger and around the same age as the girl. The thought crossed my mind: "What if this girl were my sister?" In that moment, I rushed over and gave her some money. I knew it was probably the wrong thing to do, as the money would likely be taken by the adults exploiting her. It felt like an unfair action. But I hoped that, at least for that one day, she might have the chance to enjoy a warm meal and a comfortable place to sleep.

Returning to Japan after that unforgettable experience, I found the country buzzing with excitement for the arrival of the 21st century. On television, celebrities in glamorous outfits celebrated as fireworks lit up the sky. As I watched, I felt a profound sense of helplessness because I felt that the girl I had seen in Chiang Rai would not be enjoying this milestone in a warm home with plenty of food. Such a world is wrong. I want to help those who are suffering, no matter how great the challenge, and to create a world where all children can live free from sadness and enjoy life to its fullest. Those became my ideals.

However, as I became absorbed in daily life and my studies, those ideals gradually faded from my thoughts. In 2010, I joined JCI Tokyo, largely because my uncle had introduced it to me; so I didn't join for any special reason. I had no grand ambitions or clear understanding of the JC movement; I simply enjoyed spending time with my fellow members.

During those ordinary days, I encountered someone who transformed my perspective on the JC. This person truly believed in our potential to change society and took concrete actions based on that belief. He spoke openly about his high-sounding ideals and pursued them relentlessly, even when they seemed unrealistic.

Initially, I thought such ideals were unattainable. However, through his words, actions, and the history and activities of the JC movement that I learned from him, I began to

believe that change was possible. The feelings I had in December 2000 were reignited, and I felt a strong urge to take action toward realizing those ideals.

Can the JC change the world?

JCI was founded during World War II with the dream of achieving world peace. JCI Japan was established with the dream of rebuilding a new Japan from the ashes of the post-war era. Since then, numerous members from around the world have moved mountains and worked towards a better future. Even in times of darkness, JCI has served as a beacon of hope, illuminating the way forward. Providing light in the midst of the shadows cast by society is what JCI has always strived to do. As bearers of an enduring legacy and heirs to a great tradition that has been nurtured over a long history, there is no way we can fail to change the world.

Toward a future we can be proud of, knowing that it did not change on its own but that we are the ones who made the difference.

2. Let Us Create a World

Let us move forward with a social development movement, rather than a movement focused on resolving social issues

In 2025, we will commemorate 80 years since the end of World War II. Japan, having swiftly achieved prosperity in Asia through post-war recovery and rapid economic growth, has developed a social system that addresses environmental and social issues to ensure safety and security. Consequently, Japan has become a model for nation-building across many Asian countries. However, today we face unprecedented challenges, including global environmental crises, extreme inequality, division, and conflict. Our world is in a state of chaos.

We live in an era where we can connect with anyone, anywhere, at any time. Values are changing rapidly, creating uncertainty about Japan's future and casting darkness and a vague sense of anxiety over society. Yet, our predecessors always chose to "create the future" rather than "wait for something to happen," even amidst the post-war chaos. Confronted with the turmoil of the post-war period, they proclaimed, "Rebuilding a new Japan is the work of our youth," and took it upon themselves to shape the future. JCI has consistently been a beacon of hope during times of uncertainty, challenging the status quo and lighting the way forward. Since our founding, our mission has been to inspire hope for a "bright and prosperous society" and to actively shape the future.

Some may dismiss the idea of creating the future as idealistic folly, ignorant of reality. However, no matter how immature and naïve these ideals may seem, navigating life without ideals is like setting sail without a compass. For this reason precisely, let us articulate our ideals. Regardless of how much others may mock or reject us, speaking about our ideals and pursuing them with a strong sense of purpose is what it truly means to shape the future.

This is the essence of a social development movement. Rather than focusing solely on current challenges, we must envision an ideal future and once again steer our efforts towards societal progress. Embracing this approach to social development is

the direction we should pursue now.

From Building New Social Systems to Reforming Individual Consciousness

What does our ideal of a "bright and prosperous society" truly mean? As society undergoes significant transformation, it is the role of JCI to clearly define this future and actively work towards realizing it.

To achieve a bright and prosperous society, I believe the JCI movement should focus on engaging a broad range of citizens and shift from "creating new social systems" to "reforming individual consciousness." To create a new world by transforming both the development of new social systems and individual consciousness, it requires projects that anticipate future challenges, shape the future, and foster widespread support and empathy.

Projects that anticipate future challenges and shape the future do not merely address current problems with temporary solutions. Instead, they involve envisioning an ideal future and working backward from that vision to identify and resolve the necessary issues. Rather than reacting to problems as they arise, as if whacking a mole, we use backcasting to create a desired future and address problems accordingly. This proactive approach has been central to the JC's efforts since its inception during the post-war period. It continues to define the JC movement today, in an era characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), where issues like inequality, division, and conflicts persist.

However, generating mere empathy is not enough. Even with empathy, the movement cannot grow without clear implementation strategies. It is essential to introduce new social systems to citizens and secure their support for them. We should begin by offering practical methods that citizens can adopt and rally support around. Without widespread empathy and making these issues shared societal concerns, individual consciousness reform will be unattainable. Therefore, we must actively pursue new challenges while selecting approaches that are appropriate for the times, all while staying true to the core principles of the JC movement.

3. Japan Leading the World

Leading the World through Our Initiatives

JCI Japan has a history of making a global impact through its initiatives. One notable example is the ***Mottainai*** movement, launched in 1993. The movement resonated widely and, the following year, became an official JCI program. It even garnered support from Wangari Maathai, the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. The Japanese concept of もったいない (*mottainai*), which highlights the importance of not wasting resources, was further elevated to the global term **MOTTAINAI**.

Today, JCI Japan continues to spearhead initiatives with global impact. One such project is the "JCI Japan Global Youth UN Ambassador Development Program," launched in 2011.

This program aims to develop individuals who can excel on the global stage by bringing together Japanese and international students to explore global challenges

and the differences between Japan and the rest of the world, fostering a global perspective, including domestic and overseas perspectives. During 2024 JCI ASPAC Angkor, a Global Peace Summit showcased student presentations, which received widespread support and sparked interest in hosting similar events in other countries. Building on this success, we aim to expand the program into the "JCI Global Youth UN Ambassador Development Program," making it a global JCI Japan initiative by hosting it in various countries.

Japan's Untapped Potential

Japan is currently grappling with the significant challenge of a declining population. However, on a global scale, population growth is a major concern. According to the United Nations, the world population has exceeded eight billion, is expected to reach nine billion by 2037, and could peak at 10.4 billion by 2080. While Japan's domestic market may be contracting, the global market is expanding. Additionally, by 2050, over 80% of the world's population is projected to live in developing and emerging countries, particularly in East Asia, South Asia, and Africa. This shifting global landscape presents a substantial opportunity for Japan to target these markets, which will make up the majority of the global population, potentially boosting exports and revitalizing regional industries. Japan has the capability to turn this opportunity into reality.

The Economic Complexity Index (ECI), developed by the Growth Lab at Harvard University's Center for International Development, underscores Japan's potential. The ECI ranks countries based on the diversity and complexity of their export products, and Japan has consistently topped the list from 1995 to the latest data in 2021. It is said that countries with high levels of complexity have a variety of advanced and specialized capabilities and can produce highly diversified and complex product groups. Rather than being concentrated in a single industry, Japan's strength lies in its advanced expertise and diversity, positioning it as a potential leader on the global stage.

The ECI highlights Japan's strength in producing diverse and unique products, proving what has long been recognized as a key strength to be true. Japanese quality is held in high regard, in items such as eyeglasses, cutlery, leather goods, lacquerware, sake, fruit, and anime. Nevertheless, there remain numerous untapped products and services with potential in regional areas.

Challenging the Overseas Market

The Economic Complexity Index reveals our tremendous potential. The key challenge is how to realize this potential. Japan is sometimes derided as being like the Galapagos Islands, but this uniqueness is actually a major asset. It is precisely because Japan has developed independently that it possesses unique opportunities. To fully capitalize on this distinctiveness, an external perspective is crucial. While it is important to recognize and promote regional attractions from within, understanding their value from a broader viewpoint is essential. It is often said that many regions in Japan may be unaware of their own appeal, possibly due to a limited, regional focus. Therefore, incorporating outside perspectives is necessary to unlock the vast

potential lying dormant in these areas.

For example, rather than being restricted to District or Bloc Councils, it is crucial to actively integrate external viewpoints through initiatives like exchange programs. When individuals with a shared awareness of issues assess each other's potential from an outside perspective, it can create value beyond simple human resource exchanges. Additionally, a major strength of JCI is our existing network, which can help disseminate these newly discovered attractions both nationally and globally.

4. Bringing Regional Value to Japan and the World

Discovering Inspiring Initiatives

Japanese industry is known for its diversity and complexity, which adds to Japan's appeal. And the same applies to JCI Japan. At its inception, JCI was envisioned as an organization that would emerge spontaneously, much like groundwater. This is why Local Organizations have operated independently, developing a broad array of initiatives in their respective regions. JCI Japan serves as a comprehensive coordinating body, facilitating mutual enlightenment and information sharing across these local efforts.

Given this history, it is essential to strengthen JCI Japan's role as a coordinating body. The key to mutual enlightenment and information sharing lies in the AWARDS JAPAN program. While AWARDS JAPAN has traditionally focused on celebrating outstanding initiatives, its most crucial role is in learning about and sharing the high-quality projects being developed across Japan. Even if individual policies and initiatives are of exceptional quality, they may optimize only specific aspects rather than the whole. To overcome this limitation, we need to enhance JCI Japan's function as a comprehensive coordinating body.

While it is important for JCI Japan to create outstanding initiatives, it is equally crucial to optimize and disseminate high-quality projects continuously emerging across the nation. We aim to enhance this function to ensure that these exemplary initiatives can be scaled and implemented as new social systems in various regions.

Creating Sustainable Communities with a Focus on the Environment

Many foreign visitors come to Japan to experience its natural beauty and cultural heritage. The Japanese perspective on nature is often described as circular and cyclical, focusing on the efficient use of limited resources and harmonious coexistence with nature. The culture and traditions that have arisen from this cyclical relationship between humans and the environment have enabled Japan to benefit from inbound tourism. These natural and cultural treasures, which evoke profound emotions, are valuable legacies from our predecessors that we must preserve for future generations.

However, it is said that Japan has not fully harnessed its natural and cultural resources. By maximizing the use of these assets, we can drive economic growth and reinvest the profits into environmental conservation, creating a positive feedback loop. To accelerate this process, we need to incorporate external perspectives and focus on sustainable community development. Shifting from a viewpoint that primarily

emphasizes environmental consideration to one that actively leverages these resources for economic benefit can help achieve sustainable development in our communities.

Further Enhancing Regional Development

Just as there are many compelling initiatives across various regions, there are also numerous innovative management methods and untapped talent. JCI Japan organizes events such as the Value Design Contest and TOYP to discover and recognize these assets. However, these efforts currently focus only on identifying and awarding them. The next step should be to leverage this valuable information. It is essential to extract revitalization strategies from past data and collaborate with awardees to transform these insights into actionable initiatives. Rather than initiating projects solely as JCI Japan, we can foster new innovations by partnering with a wide range of collaborators.

5. Strengthening Japan's Foundation

Harnessing the Energy of Curiosity

A well-known anecdote recounts how Isaac Newton discovered the law of universal gravitation after observing an apple fall from a tree. While the falling apple might have seemed trivial to others, it ignited Newton's curiosity. The energy of curiosity became a pivotal force in creating our world.

What Google, Amazon, Facebook, and Apple—often collectively referred to as GAFA—have in common is that their success began with curiosity and experimentation. Their achievements were not the result of calculations; they transformed the energy of curiosity into tangible outcomes. While setting KPIs and forecasting financials are important, focusing solely on these aspects can detract from the core energy of curiosity. It is essential to foster curiosity and shift from rote education to inquiry-based learning. Children possess boundless potential, though its exact form is unpredictable. Therefore, in order to spark their curiosity, it is crucial to show as many apples, or opportunities, to children as possible.

A new era, "Society 5.0," is beginning to emerge following our current information-driven society, "Society 4.0." Society 5.0 aims to create a human-centered society by integrating cyber (virtual) space with physical (real) space, striving to balance economic development with solutions to social issues.

With the implementation of Society 5.0, it will become possible to offer personalized learning opportunities and environments, which is expected to significantly transform traditional approaches to education and learning. To prepare for this shift, we should focus on developing education systems that prioritize individual optimization.

Preparing for Inevitable Crises

Historically, Japan did not experience a disaster causing over 1,000 deaths or missing persons from the 1959 Ise Bay Typhoon until the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. During these 36 years, Japan enjoyed "miraculous economic growth," partly due to the absence of major disasters. However, Japan has frequently faced natural crises. Preparing to minimize damage from these inevitable events—regardless of when

they occur—is essential and has become a way of life in Japan.

In January 1, 2024, as the Senior Executive Director of JCI Japan, I was involved in disaster support for the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. We encountered many unexpected situations that our well-prepared disaster response manual did not anticipate. Although the manual was developed based on experiences from the Great Hanshin Earthquake and the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, we faced unprecedented scenarios that required immediate, on-the-spot decisions.

Despite being personally affected, many Jaycees stepped up to take action. I am confident that when future disasters, such as the Nankai Trough Earthquake or a major earthquake beneath Tokyo, occur, Jaycees will once again lead the response. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance the quality of leadership to maximize effectiveness. Leadership in emergencies involves more than just issuing orders; it requires building trust and motivating action. This demands strong communication skills, sound decision-making, and flexibility. Given the profound impact of earthquakes on society, effective leadership during such events is of utmost importance.

Confronting the Current Crisis

On August 14, 1945, Japan marked the end of World War II with the announcement of surrender. As we approach 2025, the 80th anniversary of the end of the war, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment. Despite this significant milestone, humanity faces challenges that are far from the dream of world peace, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Israel's attacks on the Palestinian territories. Should we regard these issues as distant problems?

As the only country to have experienced the devastation of atomic bombs, with a history of 3.1 million war casualties, Japan has a responsibility to act. Conflicts often involve grievances on both sides, and determining who is right can be challenging. However, this should not be an excuse to ignore the problems.

The choice is straightforward: everyone must choose not to fight. We should extend help to those in need and seek support when we are struggling. By recognizing that everyone is as valuable as ourselves, we can work to end hunger, poverty, suffering, and brutality everywhere.

This may sound like a naive ideal with almost zero chance of success. However, we cannot give up on the future our children will inherit. We must strive to create a world where they can live without fear for their safety and always find reasons to smile.

To achieve this, we must learn from past tragedies. To prevent a repeat of the same tragic events that may now, eighty years later, be fading from our memories, and avoid inflicting the same suffering on the world once again, we need to take proactive action on a global scale.

Toward Economic Justice

In the JCI Creed we can find the words “economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise.” It is important to understand why it refers specifically to economic “justice” rather than focusing on equality or fairness alone. Capitalism typically involves individuals freely owning capital and engaging in business activities. While capitalism promotes economic development through free competition, it also

presents challenges such as unemployment during downturns and growing wealth disparities. To address these issues, it is crucial to focus on economic justice. To achieve economic justice, we must focus on how to increase shared wealth. Instead of letting a few wealthy individuals monopolize resources, we need to protect essential resources as common assets to ensure that everyone can live well and freely participate in economic activities. A key concept in this effort is "association," which involves uniting and collaborating. By establishing a democratic society based on voluntary mutual assistance and solidarity, we can address the challenges of capitalism.

6. For the Family, Company, and Community

For the Family, Company, and Community

As Junior Chamber International works towards creating a bright and prosperous society, we occasionally hear concerns from our members, such as "JC activities have negatively impacted my company's performance" or "my family is struggling." The family is the smallest unit of society, and a truly vibrant society cannot be built at the expense of families or companies. As Zenbei Miwa, the first Local President of JCI Tokyo, once said, "Young people who want to improve their families, companies, and communities came together." It is time for us to return to the original point.

The "original point" was to enhance families, companies, and communities through the JC movement. Reducing the number of meetings is merely a method. Our goal should not just be efficiency, but to maximize effectiveness and improve productivity. Based on this original point, our focus should be on whether our projects contribute to the betterment of families, companies, and communities, rather than just the number or format of meetings. We must preserve the essence of the JC movement while resolutely changing any aspects that do not align with this core principle. Additionally, we need to reform the organization so that every member can proudly affirm that it is "for the family, company, and community."

For the Flourishing of Diverse Talents

To create excellent initiatives, diverse talents are essential. When the topic of diversity arises, JCI Japan is often criticized for lacking diversity, being predominantly male. However, inherent diversity exists even among individuals of the same gender, and merely including individuals of the opposite gender without addressing the deeper essence of diversity seems to deviate from its true nature. The "essence of diversity" lies not in gender, nationality, or religion, but in the individuality of each person. Conflict enriches dialogue and generates new ideas. Instead of fearing or avoiding conflict, focusing on how to embrace and harmonize it is crucial for creating an environment where diverse talents can thrive.

Pursuing diversity does not equate to granting unlimited freedom to everyone. In his book *The Lonely Crowd*, David Riesman, Professor Emeritus of Social Studies at Harvard University, argues that modern individuals, having been liberated from traditional values and lost a shared sense of purpose, often experience feelings of powerlessness and emptiness. They become part of a "lonely crowd," conforming to

others. Paradoxically, when diversity of values is used as a foundation for freedom, it can lead to disorder and uniformity. To avoid becoming part of this "lonely crowd," it is crucial to uphold shared values while embracing diverse talents and methods.

The terms "origin" and "tradition" may seem outdated or rigid, but they represent our "shared values." When diversity of values takes precedence, these "shared values" can be lost, leading to a mere "lonely crowd." Therefore, it is crucial to uphold foundational documents such as the founding charter, principles, and creed as embodiments of our "shared values" and to maintain consistency in these core aspects without allowing diversity. Otherwise, we risk deteriorating from an organized entity into just another crowd.

Always placing the Local Organizations first

Currently, a major challenge facing JCI Japan is the decline in membership numbers. Local Organizations are the driving force behind our initiatives, and the weakening of this engine directly impacts the weakening of JCI Japan. In addressing this issue, what is crucial for a comprehensive coordination organization? It is the ability to gather more genuine feedback.

The challenges faced by our Local Organizations include expansion, human resource development, and initiative building. Instead of imposing initiatives from above, JCI Japan must thoroughly investigate these challenges, tailor support to the needs of each Local Organization, and provide appropriate methods. It is crucial for JCI Japan to stay engaged and supportive, always placing our Local Organizations as our top priority, and to offer customized strategies rather than remaining a distant entity.

Expansion of the Councils

The District and Bloc Councils, which serve as the closest bodies to the Local Organizations and represent the JCI Japan National President, hold crucial positions within our organization. However, with the current nationwide decline in both membership numbers and years of service, reports indicate that Council chairs and committee head positions are often held by members who have not had the opportunity to serve in executive roles at their Local Organizations, or by new members facing significant responsibilities. This situation leads to ineffective dissemination of JCI Japan's ideas and support.

To address these challenges and build a valued organization to be chosen by the public, expansion is crucial. This means "broadening knowledge and enhancing activities." We must focus on expanding our initiatives by deeply understanding the organization's significance and philosophy, demonstrating societal value through our actions, and fostering personal growth. This approach will create a cycle of expansion. We will implement JCI programs such as JCI Achieve and JCI Impact led by the District and Bloc Councils to promote understanding of JCI's philosophy and goals, make use of the Action Framework and develop human assets capable of driving these initiatives.

7. Lastly

In 2023, as the JCI Japan Vice President of the International Affairs Group, I visited

numerous countries, including those in Asia. What stood out to me was the profound conviction among people in the Asian region that "tomorrow will be better than today." Their optimism and hope for the future, even in difficult times, were deeply inspiring and almost enviable.

Reflecting on this, I wonder if people in Japan during the period of rapid economic growth shared a similar mindset. Today, as we navigate what is referred to as the "lost 30 years," coupled with rising prices and a declining population, the news often seems overwhelmingly pessimistic. It may be true that many of us tend to view the situation with pessimism. While caution is essential during crises, excessive pessimism is unwarranted. Japan has enjoyed over half a century of peace and prosperity, earning international respect as a success model and being recognized as "Japan No. 1." We have also overcome significant crises, including the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Therefore, I am confident that Japan will overcome any challenges that come our way.

POWER OF ONE

A single person's dreams and ideals have driven millions and changed the world.

As a long-established organization, the JC finds meaning in transcending tradition. By honoring and following in the footsteps of our great predecessors, we continue to think independently. Innovation is what lies ahead for us.

We must forge a future where we can proudly declare, "We changed the world," rather than merely observing and saying, "The world has changed."

Toward a future we can be proud of, knowing that it did not change on its own but that we are the ones who made the difference.